This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

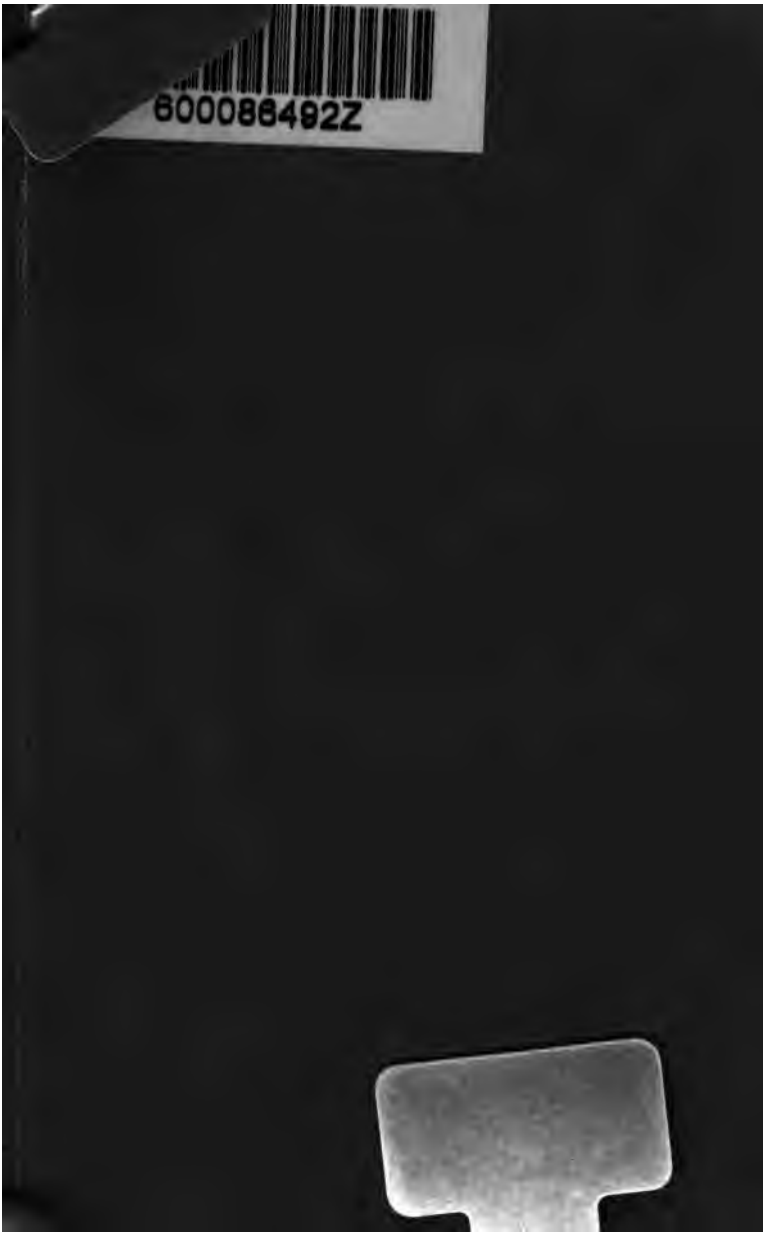
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

CHEQUER ALLEY

A Story

of

SUCCESSFUL CHRISTIAN WORK


600086492Z

COW'S PLACE, CHEQUER ALLEY.

SITE FOR THE NEW SCHOOL-CHAPEL.

CHEQUER ALLEY:

A Story

OF

SUCCESSFUL CHRISTIAN WORK.

BY THE

REV. FREDERICK W. BRIGGS.

With an Introduction

BY THE REV. WILLIAM ARTHUR, M.A.

LONDON:

HAMILTON ADAMS & Co., PATERNOSTER ROW;

SOLD ALSO AT 66, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1866.

/33 ÷ 1.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY HAYMAN BROTHERS,
GOUGH SQUARE, E.C.,
AND GLOUCESTER STREET, REGENT'S PARK, N.W.

Introduction.

MY first knowledge of the neighbourhood of Chequer Alley was nearly thirty years ago, when a student at Hoxton. Not a few of my fellow-students, who then on Sunday mornings faced the rough groups in Whitecross Street, have passed to "that city so holy and clean," where the contrast of place and inhabitants will not diminish the beauty of their position when they stood amid those depraved and ill-clad gatherings.

Subsequently, when in the City Road Circuit, it was my pleasure to watch some of Miss Macarthy's early labours. Already, she had been enabled to find an entrance into the Alley, open a Room, and gather a congregation for the Local Preachers, who gladly went to preach to them. In what strange circumstances, with what exceptional incidents, and under what

rude discouragements this beginning was made, the succeeding narrative will show. But, from the time when the first hymn was interlarded with "snatches of old songs" up to this hour, an unbroken series of Christian services have brought warning, light, and blessing to those "harlots, and publicans, and thieves."

I well remember when the Rev. John Scott, after full inquiry, appointed Miss Macarthy Class Leader, that she might herself be the helper on their way of those twenty souls whose gathering in to the Lord is so well told. Up to the present time, some five hundred have enjoyed the benefit of her classes. How much happiness on the part of the Leader, of profit to the souls of the Members, of general benefit to their families and neighbours, and of joy in heaven, does not that one fact represent!

The relation of what has been done in Chequer Alley will, we cannot doubt, be made the means of leading some who dwell within reach of places equally depraved to attempt similar usefulness. They are sure to be met with equal, if not similar, hindrances. They will not succeed but by similar patience and tact, similar power of becoming one with the

people's right feelings, and yet ever leading them away from their vices, ever winning them to the knowledge of God and of His Christ. And if the seed there sown shall spring up, through this little book, in Meetings, Schools, Classes, and Congregations in the dark places of more than one of our large towns, the labours bestowed on the wretched and evil in that locality, blessed already, will then be doubly blessed.

W. A.

CHEQUER ALLEY.

I.

IN the year 1841, an intelligent woman in humble life began to ask herself, How may I best employ my spare time and my natural gifts for Christian usefulness? A sorrowful event in her personal history had been the means of rousing her to a solicitude for her own spiritual interests. She had suddenly woke up as from a deadly stupor, had penitently sought and obtained redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins; and now, in the first fresh fervour of love to Him in whom she believed, and under a newly awakened sense of obligation to advance His honour by consecrating her powers to the purposes of His grace, she submissively inquired, "*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*"

This question was not long undecided. A work loudly demanding Christian effort, yet hitherto strangely neglected, lay immediately before her; and applying herself to it under a firm conviction

of duty, she resolved, as Providence should favour her, to prosecute it with unswerving diligence and fidelity. For a quarter of a century she has now been toiling quietly, patiently, and successfully on the same ground: not single-handed, however, for moved by her example, others have been associated with her in larger or smaller numbers from the first; but always as the foremost, most active and constant labourer. With diminished bodily vigour, but with unabated zeal, she still carries on her work, honoured and beloved by all who know her. Still earning her daily bread with her own hands, and still devoting the evenings of the week and several hours of the Sunday to the benevolent and godly ends she has so long sought to accomplish.

The history of the work of which this excellent woman has been the pioneer and leader, is so full of instruction and encouragement for others who sympathize with the condition of the classes she has sought to benefit, that it is due to them that it should no longer be withheld from publication. To persons of this character then, the following pages will be addressed. My object, as the writer, is practical; yet the story must be left in general to impress its own lessons. Occasionally we may have to turn aside to consider the value of some principle of action; and it may be proper

before concluding to point out the peculiar claims of that Power to rescue men from the lowest depths of degradation which the narrative so specially commends. But the staple material with which I am called to deal is facts; hard and rugged, yet also, in many instances, tender and pleasant facts, which I shall endeavour to state clearly, concisely, and without exaggeration. I shall have nothing to offer those who read for idle entertainment and pleasure; nor am I about to discuss theories and hypotheses. But if the reader desires to enlarge his understanding and heart by a better acquaintance with the condition of multitudes within his reach, who are very closely linked to himself, both naturally and socially, however he may shrink from an acknowledgment of the relationship; if he desires to confirm his faith in the sufficiency of Christianity to raise and renovate the most deeply fallen, by the contemplation of decisive examples of its power; and, above all, if he desires to be stimulated to increased personal effort for the evangelization of the heathen at home, and thus, while conferring priceless blessings upon them, add dignity and strength to his own character;—then I hope he will not peruse this little book in vain.

II.

The Alley and its People.

THE form of Christian activity which seemed to MISS MACARTHY, the prime agent in the scenes and successes about to be described, the most suitable to her ability and means, was the visitation of the poor and degraded in their own abodes by the aid of tract distribution; and of the localities around her, none seemed so loudly to call for the benefit of such visitation as CHEQUER ALLEY. Under this impression, she applied to the Secretary of the Tract Society connected with the *Wesleyan Chapel, City Road*, to be enrolled as an accredited distributor, and to have a part of Chequer Alley allotted to her as her district. Yet at that time how little did she foresee the extensive influence for good of which this act was to be the origin!

Chequer Alley is the name of an irregular avenue leading from Bunhill Row to Whitecross Street, having multitudinous blind and semi-blind courts branching out from it right and left. Together with its associated parallel alleys and

courts, it forms a district which has for its four sides Coleman Street, with the Friends' Burial Ground, on the north; Chiswell Street on the south; Bunhill Row on the east; and Whitecross Street on the west; and comprises a population of about 15,000 souls. Thus shut in from the public eye, Chequer Alley, with its network of connected alleys and courts, has been for many years the privileged refuge of the outcast and degraded; the haunt of intemperance, dissoluteness, and crime; a sort of lodgment for many of the waifs and strays that float on the great sea and wander about the broad ways of London life. The bulk of its residents are at this day as completely separated in their habits and characters from the well-conditioned people with whom you are accustomed to associate, as are the inhabitants of an African kraal. They live together, a whole family in a single room, which serves for sleeping and all other purposes; their furniture scanty; their food coarse, precarious, and insufficient; their children growing up around them amidst sights and sounds which tend to deaden all their moral sensibilities, to develop the vilest passions of their nature, and to render self-respect an impossibility. Many of them subsist on the wages of iniquity; many more by daily and habitual theft. Not many days ago there might have

been frequently seen there a tall, well-built, and fashionably-attired man, wearing gold rings and flourishing a cane in his hand. This man was a professional *thief-trainer*, and had a lecture-room in the Alley, which he attended periodically to give lectures in the art of pocket-picking. Happily he has just been apprehended and sentenced to two years' imprisonment, so that for the present his class is broken up. Of course, people of this character are exceptionally bad; and the inhabitants generally are so far from sympathizing with them, or desiring to afford them shelter, that they would gladly deliver them into the hands of justice. The majority gain an honest living, such as it is, as costermongers, whelks dealers, crossing-sweepers, and the like; and some labour in the more regular branches of trade. Yet, looking at them broadly and only as to the outer man, it would be hard for you to think of them as endowed with *minds;* as having within them the germs of immortality, and redeemed with the blood of Christ. The only characters you would see are those of mere animal natures, formed to enjoy the grossest sensual existence, moving in obedience to a blind and erring instinct, and blundering onward to a premature death.

The material condition of the Alley has been much improved since Miss Macarthy began her

labours there. It is now well paved, drained, and supplied with pure water: then it was not only unpaved, the footway being in wet weather a mere pebbly slush, but the eyes and other organs were offended to an extent they now are not, with accumulations of filth, open cesspools, and here and there a kind of polluted little pond, in which dirty ducks were wading and ragged children dabbling. Morally and socially, also, the condition of the people, shockingly low as it still is, is better than it was then, and, it is hoped, continues to improve. There is said to be less ferocity; there are fewer brawls and fights, and perhaps there is less profanity. A man thirsting for their elevation may now go in and out among them without any fear of personal molestation. The worst the Christian labourer has to apprehend is some strange and original oath or jest. Nor are the attendants at public worship in the little room so often *intentionally* disturbed. It is necessary still to keep guard at the door to prevent riotous lads from assembling before the window to gamble, and noisy women to gossip and quarrel. Occasionally, also, a great grinning face, with a short pipe in the mouth, continues to display its comic expression through the top of the window frame, where a pane has been removed for the sake of ventilation. But these are almost

the only tests of temper to which the worshippers are subject; and even these are beginning to be disregarded. Policemen may now be seen in the Alley alone, whereas formerly they never ventured to walk there but in company; and costermongers' carts and barrows are now left all night in the open courts, which, as a gentleman who was brought up in the neighbourhood assures me, would never have been thought of some years since.

To verses written by the same gentleman, and sold in aid of the Sunday School, I am indebted for the following descriptive stanzas:—

"The path was mud, and slop, and pebble paving,
Save where the urchins had pulled out the stones,
And dug deep holes, a little more mud craving,
With cabbage leaves, tin kettles, and fish bones;
As wild they ran, all shouting, yelling, raving,
In every kind of Pandemonium tones,
O'er that great heap of rubbish, high in air,
Which filled the centre of our Chequer Square.

"How much of glass the windows might contain,
And how much paper we cannot determine,
How many roofs that would keep out the rain;
How many cesspools bringing still the germ in
Of typhus fever, and its hideous train;
How much of dirt; how many kinds of vermin,
That made the Alley (need we an apologist?)
A fine field for a British entomologist.

"The people all were like their circumstances,
As low as ignorance and vice could push them,
No odds the source from which they got finances
From begg'ry, theft or toil,—their want would crush them.
Improvidence their misery enhances,
Till workhouse homes or paupers' graves could hush them,
No ray of good through their dark arch* was taken,
They seemed alike by man and God forsaken."†

Both physically and morally the whole locality was at that time as degraded as can well be conceived. It was a vast social wilderness, the haunt

* The entrance in Bunhill Row.

† The writer of these lines has given me the following, as one of many illustrative facts of which he has personal knowledge:—

"Three or four men were drinking at a public house till midnight, to see a new year in, and when turned out by the landlord, being ripe for any kind of mischief, they pulled up a fence-post and used it as a battering ram against several house doors in succession. At the third or fourth, a poor man, named Wilton, roused out of sleep was about to look out to see what the disturbance meant, and reached the door at the right instant to have it driven off its hinges into his face. Bruised, bleeding, and half naked, he ran up and down to seek a policeman, but could as well have found the man in the moon!"

In contrast with this, the writer adds,—

"I walked through the Alley last night, after leaving my class. It was about a quarter-past ten. The loiterer at the Whitecross Street end civilly stepped on one side as I passed in. A boy lustily shouting out the refrain of some street song passed me without remark. Two women talking at one of the corners, said nothing to me. A coster mending his barrow attended solely to his hammer and nails. I stood a minute, looking up the court at the other end: a man came out of the shop at the corner, gazed at me for a moment, and passed on. The drunkards' noise at the public house was all indoors. From end to end of the Alley no one offered the slightest molestation, or spoke to me or at me, though my white neck-tie *might* have challenged observation;—*it was not so once.*"

of the lowest and most lawless, the most respectable in rank among them being scavengers, sweeps, and rat-catchers.

Could nothing, then, be done to improve their condition? Were they to be abandoned to live and die in darkness and guilt, as if beyond the reach of the Gospel itself? Or, if none can be too deeply fallen for the Gospel to raise, was it not a most sacred and absolute duty to bring them under its influence? Did not the example and the injunctions of Christ, and the spirit and purpose of Christianity, render it supremely obligatory to seek in order to save these that were so utterly lost? Yet here were thousands of human creatures, associated within the sound of the "church-going bell," as ignorant and sensual as the most degraded savage; and no man seemed to care for their souls!

It no doubt required much courage, much strength of resolution, an unfaltering faith in the power of Divine truth, and much of that noble enthusiasm without which nothing great is ever accomplished, to volunteer to become a missionary to this wretched horde. Yet he who has these qualities, combined with a moderate degree of health, and common discretion, has all that is really requisite. It is a mistake to suppose that you need some extraordinary natural fitness, or

some peculiar educational advantages, to render you efficient as a house-to-house visitor for the ends of Christian benevolence. The most essential qualification is that which no true Christian can lack, namely, a supreme love to Christ, and a real sympathy with Him and with His purposes of grace. If you have this, and will suffer yourself to act under its promptings, your manners undisfigured by those ugly airs and that ridiculous affectation which vanity and self-consequence produce, you are perfectly equipped for your work. Take the love of Christ for your motive, *and be natural.* Deal with the poor as you would yourself be dealt with by another.

III.

Beginning to Work.

INVESTED with the official recognition she desired, and having obtained a supply of tracts, Miss Macarthy took with her her early and constant friend, Miss Taylor, and set out on her mission. For an instant, when the friends arrived at the scene of their intended labours, a strange recoil of feeling seized them. They paused at the low archway through which the dreary-looking Alley was to be entered, and where a group of big ragged lads were quarrelling over a game of toss; and instead of advancing, they involuntarily stepped on beyond. The struggle was only for a moment. As they returned and reapproached, the lads sullenly gave way, and they proceeded to the first door. The knock was answered by a coarse-looking woman. "We have called," said the visitors, "to leave you a little book to read, and if you should like it, we shall be happy to call again next Sunday, and exchange it for another." The tract was taken with apparent willingness, and the ladies, encouraged by their

reception, proceeded in the same manner from dwelling to dwelling to about fifty families. The tenants were taken by a kind of surprise. It was a new thing to them to see decently clad people in their dread domain; and the new and strange thought passed through the minds of some of them, that there were persons in this hard and selfish world, who, whatever the unlooked-for visit boded, evidently cared for them and desired to do them good.

In a few weeks the charm of novelty was dispelled; and when it was found that the visitors sought opportunities of speaking about God, redemption, and a future world, some exchanged the tract with rude indifference: "Here, let us have the thing; but we don't want it, and it would be quite as well for you to mind your own business." Some told the visitors gruffly, "It aint no use for you to leave your books here, 'cos we can't read 'em." Some said the children had torn up the last, and they did not want to be plagued with any more. Others (who were afterwards found to have been coiners of base metal) refused to open the door, or, having opened it, immediately shut it with a slam without uttering a word; and others betook themselves to insulting jesting. One woman said, but whether in ignorance or insolence, was not discernible, "La, ma'am, my

husband is out of work, and would like to go round with tracts like you; he would do it for twelve shillings a week." Others assumed a whining tone, spoke of their poverty and rags, and of the want of bread for their children, insinuating that the tract would be more acceptable if accompanied with a donation in money, or a coal ticket. A few continued to treat the visitors with civility but were so prompt in taking the tract out of their hands and replacing the one to be returned, as to produce the impression that they were eager to part company. Gradually as one emboldened the other, they became grossly insulting both in language and behaviour. One man sprang out of his bed and, as he was, ran towards the visitors, who were compelled to beat a hasty retreat; another fellow followed them in the same condition through a part of the Alley, amidst the ribaldry and uproarious laughter of a crowd of spectators.

On a mind less firm than that of our friend, or less sustained by habits of trust in God, and a true and intelligent faith in the sufficiency of the Gospel to raise the most degraded, the experience of the first six months of labour must have had the most depressing effect, and the ground would certainly have been abandoned in despair. Nor was this the only source of discouragement she

was called to withstand. The fatal typhus, or as it is too truly called, the "court," or "poverty" fever, was raging in the Alley; and, taking the infection, she was withdrawn from her chosen sphere of labour, and, as one of its earliest results, called to pass through a season of physical suffering and peril.

IV.

Progress.

RECOVERING from the fever, Miss Macarthy speedily returned to her work in the Alley. The people, she thought, received her visits with less interest than before. They had become accustomed to the weekly call, which her friend and others had continued to pay during her sickness, and had now come to regard it with apathy. Then it occurred to her, or to one of the friends associated with her, that it was time to try the effect of *preaching*. This was God's specially ordained instrument for the salvation of men; and since it was vain to urge the people to go to a place of worship to hear the Gospel, it was an evident duty, if possible, to bring the living preacher to them.

But in order to this a suitable meeting-place must be procured. The visitors had but limited pecuniary resources at command; yet together they could subscribe, or be answerable for, a shilling per week, and could not some one be found willing for this consideration, to allow them

the use of a room for a single hour each Sunday afternoon! Agreeing as to the most likely houses, they set out on their fresh expedition, their past experience moderating their hopes of immediate success. Proceeding from house to house the request was courteously made; but to no purpose. Some thought the proposal very fair, but it clashed with their convenience; some ridiculed the project; others treated the applicants with insult. The wife of a rat-catcher at length, eager to get the proffered shilling, expressed a willingness to let her room. This was the first note of encouragement the visitors heard; but it was no sooner spoken than the husband, roused to the most violent hostility, drove them from the door. Turning, however, to the door on the opposite side of the same passage, the agreement was at once concluded; and, rudely as the rat-catcher had treated them, the visitors found afterwards that their prior offer to rent his room had the effect of restraining his subsequent opposition.

There was no difficulty in obtaining a preacher. Mr. Stones, now deceased, a Local Preacher of exemplary piety and good sense, most readily tendered his services; and the hour of meeting being fixed, the ladies once more swept through the Alley to invite attendance. About thirty per-

sons came together, quite crowding the room, which was encumbered with only two articles of furniture, namely, a small table and a bedstead turned up in a corner, with the exception of a low stool which the rat-catcher's wife brought in for the special accommodation of the "angels."

By what power have these miserably degraded people, men and women—"harlots, and publicans, and thieves"—some of them unmistakably under the influence of gin or ale, been gathered together in that small apartment? What is it that has prompted them, in compliance with the invitation of that slender and delicate-looking stranger, to slink away in their filth and rags from their Sunday afternoon amusements, their hearths, or that haunt of never-failing attractions —the Gin Palace—and to stand jostling side by side in that heated room? If a reply to this question is to be derived from their conduct during the hour of meeting I fear it will yield but scanty encouragement to those earnest Christian labourers; for a more turbulent and blasphemous crowd has rarely been witnessed. The preacher began by reading some verses of a hymn; then, giving out two lines to be sung, he started a tune; and his audience sung with him,—but *they struck up snatches of old songs*, some of them too well adapted to a very different occasion. The preacher

paused, then impressively entreated silence while he addressed words of prayer in their name to the great God, their Creator and Judge; but they chattered, and joked and laughed aloud. Then the preacher endeavoured in a more direct manner to find a way to their understanding and conscience, and to deposit some grain of truth in their hearts. But the confusion increased more and more; some challenged the right of others to be present; some mimicked or burlesqued the preacher's manner; some with excited voices cried, "Ord-a-a-r," "Silence," or "Hear, hear;" and the whole body continued to sway backward and forward till the scene became distressing and distracting beyond endurance. "Would you kindly give me your attention, and refrain from speaking one to another?" said the preacher persuasively; but the appeal was answered by a gruff voice, "We shall speak if we like," followed by a general titter of applause.

But was there nothing "put on" in all this apparent recklessness and profanity? Were there no secret workings of the heart, and of the hitherto slumbering conscience beneath this appalling indifference? Was it not reasonable to hope, despite appearances to the contrary, that the people who had voluntarily obeyed the summons to come to the room to hear of a Saviour,

had begun to feel some desire to be delivered from their state of squalidness and vice and brutal ignorance? So the preacher fondly hoped, and in dependence on Him through whom alone the Word is rendered mighty to the pulling down of the strongholds, he calmly stood his ground, —his very attitude and expression a powerful sermon,—taking advantage of every occasional hush to "set forth before" the "eyes" of his giddy congregation Jesus Christ as crucified for their salvation. It was but at brief intervals that he had any hold of their attention; for, as if startled by their very silence, so soon as anything approaching silence occurred, they broke out afresh into a noisier tumult.

At length the preacher indicated his intention to withdraw. "My friends," said he in effect, "I have brought you a good message which you ought to have been thankful to hear. Perhaps some of you would like me to come again, and if so, I should be glad if you would signify this, not by shouting, but by lifting up your hands." Every hand was raised, and the company prepared to disperse. *But the door was fast!* Men outside had amused themselves by attaching a strong rope to the handle and stretching it across the narrow passage, tying the other end to the door of the rat-catcher's room, so that neither of them

could be opened! It was scarcely possible that the good evangelist should have emerged from the Alley that Sunday afternoon without a shadow of disappointment on his mind; yet it was but the shadow of a passing cloud. In a similar spirit to that in which Andrew Reed took his pencil and sketched in his pocket-book a Cross encircled with the motto, *Nil desperandum*, and surmounted with the words, "Never despond with the Cross before you," Mr. Stones longed for a recurrence of the opportunity of declaring his message to the same unpromising people.

Shortly after this, an attempt was made to reach all within the range of the human voice, even the most ignorant and hardened, by open-air preaching. But if those who had gone to the room professedly for the very purpose of hearing were restless and noisy, what was to be expected from people on whose attention the Gospel was to be forced?

Open-air preaching is a Divinely approved and powerful instrument of good; but it is an instrument which requires to be used with the soundest discretion. Unhappily in too many instances the persons the most eager to practise it, are just the least qualified to give it weight and efficiency. It is not the mere act of preaching the Gospel "o'er canopied only by the blue vault of heaven," that

our Lord's example sanctions, or that is commended and encouraged by the example of His apostles and by the success which has attended it in modern times. It is natural and obvious to appeal to those great examples in favour of the practice, but it is too often overlooked that rightly considered they indicate the character of the men most fitted for this particular work, as well as the mere fact that this is a valuable form of evangelistic enterprise. Let the preacher be a man whose understanding and sobriety shall command respect, and who is able "by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers," and not a vain and impertinent spouter, such as may be heard too frequently in the streets of London, and the best results from it may be most confidently expected.

Nearly opposite the room which had been hired for the afternoon preaching there was at that time an open space called *Chequer Square*, leading out of which, at the left hand corner, was *Davis' Court*, a place then tenanted by some of the worst people in the Alley. In the centre of the "Square" was a shallow and muddy pond, always kept in motion by a family of hungry ducks; and in the corner opposite the court was an immense mound of indescribable filth which a few fowls, enjoying themselves after their fashion,

were scratching up and scattering in all directions. The preacher took his stand, surrounded and supported by a little group of friends, at the entrance of the court, hoping, within the hearing of some of the most profligate of men, to declaim on the evil of sin, and call to immediate repentance. He was a young man of undoubted sincerity, and of great earnestness and zeal,—qualities which I trust the lessons taught by experience have not weakened, but enabled him the better to direct. Adopting what he meant to be a method of conciliation, the preacher pitched, to the words of the hymn with which he was beginning the service, the tune of a popular song—"*There's a good time coming, boys.*" The people knew the words of the song, and sang them at the same time with exuberant glee. Undaunted, the preacher went on with his hymn, and the people continued to join in the tune, singing at the utmost stretch of their voices the words of the song. In a few minutes however this unseemly scene was brought to a ludicrous close; for a man casting his eyes on the ducks and fowls, rushed out of his house and drove them cackling and flapping their dirty wings in the very faces of both the preacher and his friends, and the congregation was abruptly broken up. It was long before open-air preaching was tried again, and the second time under better auspices.

V.

Another Stage.

THE room continued to be open for the Sunday afternoon gathering, and encouraged by the unfailing attendance of the people, the few friends so anxious to do them good, came regularly, with their preacher at their head, to meet them. Week after week they exhibited very much the same grotesque and disorderly character. Sometimes the preacher touched some hitherto sealed up spring of feeling, and there suddenly burst forth from the hearer's countenance an expression of interest; but it was a mere gleam which faded the moment it was seen. Occasionally when the Cross was raised and a direct effort was made to bring the hearer under its quickening power, there was heard an involuntary sigh, as if from the first stirrings of returning life. But commonly there was the same disorder, the same inattention, and similar attempts to turn seriousness into burlesque. Once a man brought with him a pitcher of water and a glass which, with a twinkle of the eye, he passed to each person in the room. An-

other time when the preacher himself sipped a little water a man cried out, to the boisterous merriment of the whole congregation, "He's drinking gin!"

Yet, amidst all this seeming insensibility, the good friends contemplated the trial of another scheme. Nothing had so deeply affected them in their weekly visitations as the condition of the children. They saw them in their abodes of squalor, begrimed, dispirited, and unloved. They met them in the Alley bare-footed, bare-headed, filthy, terror-stricken, and half-starved. They knew that the tissues of their thoughts and affections were imbibing every day a deeper and darker dye; they witnessed the most saddening proofs that all their grossest passions were being rapidly called forth and developed, and that they were growing up in utter unconsciousness of their higher nature, to spend their wretched lives in drunkenness, prostitution and crime; to become a pest to society, and a broad blot on our assumed Christianization. And if hope was still to be entertained even on behalf of the adults on whom they were endeavouring to act, was it not much more reasonable to hope that these their children, who had not as yet passed through the same stages and the same processes of hardening, might be won to Christ?

An arrangement having been made for the use

of the room on Sunday evenings as well as afternoons, it was agreed if practicable to open a Sunday-school. A grant of books for this purpose was readily obtained from Mr. J. W. Gabriel, Superintendent of the School in Radnor street; a good carpenter, Mr. Atkinson, generously supplied a few forms. and a little desk; and the disposition of the people was again tested by a formal appeal. At the close of one of the afternoon gatherings, the preacher addressed his audience in such words as these: "Before you go away, I have something to propose to you. We should be glad to begin a Sunday-school here for the benefit of your children. Perhaps you have thought them too badly clothed to be sent to the schools outside the Alley. But if you will send them to us as clean as you can, we won't mind the want of good clothes. Our wish is to hold the school in this room in the afternoon, and to put off the service till the evening; and we should like to begin next Sunday. Would this please you?" "Yes, yes," responded several voices. "Those of you who agree to our holding a Sunday-school in the afternoon and the public service in the evening, hold up your hands." Every hand was raised, and, with brighter faces than ever before, the people went away chattering to their homes.

On the following Sunday from thirty to forty children at ages varying from five to fourteen years, presented themselves. But the good friends soon learnt that they had but very imperfectly estimated the difficulties of the task they had undertaken. Something much harder to bear than the sight of rags and dirt, and swarms of *insects*, and much more discourraging than the absence of the barest elements of learning, had to be confronted. Could these young creatures be of the nature of man, yet found as they were, without a single idea of right and duty; without a shadow of self-respect; without the consciousness of any higher powers than those which belong to brutes; without any love, or any notion of order and beauty and truth; without, as it almost seemed, the very susceptibility to high and honourable motives? Could any form or symmetry be given to material so rugged and hard?

In gentle and loving accents to which they were altogether unused, they were first addressed together, but no tact or skill of the speaker availed to win their attention; they talked aloud or whispered in each others ears, and tittered and laughed. They were spoken to singly, and then they hung down their heads in sullenness, or were saucy and sarcastic. If left for a few moments to themselves they were boisterous and mischievous, run-

ning helter-skelter round the room, or leaping from form to form. Once in the afternoon the cry of an orange and nut seller was heard, when they plunged in a body to the door, and no remonstrance or gentle force could prevent them following him with mimic screams some distance down the Alley. A more intractable set were never delivered into the teacher's hands. The first impulse of the patient labourers was to yield to a spirit of sadness and sit down and weep, but they remembered whose servants they were, and for what ends they wrought, and again took heart.

VI.

A Crisis.

"SO is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

One thing which our Lord teaches by this parable is, that the nature of man is distinguished by essential capabilities of spiritual fruitfulness. It requires cultivation, but will eventually repay the toil bestowed upon it. As the result of long neglect, it may be found very hard and wild, and much encumbered with noxious and worthless weeds; yet it is never to be abandoned as hopeless. The worse its condition, the more labour may be necessary to render it productive; but that labour properly directed will not be in vain.

Another thing which the parable teaches is, that the Gospel, as a living principle or power, is Divinely adapted to the nature of man.

But its principal lesson, and that which every

spiritual labourer should keep in continual remembrance is, that it is his duty to work on, in vigorous faith and untiring patience, even in the absence of visible signs of success. Let every man who aims at spiritual usefulness, have faith first, in the fitness of humanity, whatever may be the condition in which he finds it, to yield the results he seeks; secondly, in the Gospel as possessed of living powers of fruitfulness; and thirdly, in God Himself, on the influence of whose grace all spiritual germination, and growth, and fruitfulness depend; and having such faith, *let him be patient.* While looking for results let him be free from restless anxiety to see them. As a spiritual husbandman he cannot take too much pains to prepare the soil, by clearing away from it all destructive elements, and by enriching it with suitable nourishment for the seed. Nor can he be too careful to assure himself that the seed he sows is genuine, sound, and good; and having sown it, to guard it against the "fowls of the air," and so far as is possible against being crushed under the feet of men. But having done his part let him wait. The processes of all life are mysterious, and most mysterious of all are those of the life of godliness: but all life has powers of development and productiveness, and most of all has the life of God in the human soul such powers. It is

pleasanter, no doubt, to labour with the results we seek continually springing up before us. It is a trial of faith to work on in their absence; yet what kind of faith is that which cannot stand the trial? "He that believeth shall not make haste." "Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. *Be ye also patient.*"

Our earnest friends had laboured nearly two years without witnessing a single decisive case of conversion. Gradually however, their action had become regular and systematic; and, though not without occasional outbursts of opposition, the conduct of the people, on the whole, had greatly improved. The meetings on Sunday evenings were now in general comparatively orderly; and even the lawless people without, though they—long after those who came to hear had ceased to disturb the preacher,—continued to interrupt him by roarings of mockery, catcalls, and loud knocks at the door, had at length been constrained to abandon their sport. A gentleman had caused the room to be regularly licensed for public worship; and in terror of the law, the desperadoes had become much better behaved. The school, too, was beginning to recognise the authority of office, and to yield to the force of discipline. The more

strictly aggressive work, that of house to house visitation, was still beset with opposition; yet even this was occasionally attended with encouragement, especially in the treatment accorded to the ladies. For though, on the one hand, a gentleman had to complain that a fellow who had unwillingly given him permission to visit his dying wife, sat near him while kneeling by her bedside to pray, and deliberately puffed tobacco smoke into his face; and that a big woman encountered him at the foot of a dark staircase and forbade his going up to leave a tract; and when it became a question of strength of will or strength of muscle, whether his errand should be accomplished or not, quietly laid her brawny hands on his shoulders and sent him backwards into the Alley. Yet, on the other hand, the visits of Miss Macarthy, and her associates, were beginning to be received with a kind of welcome. The ferocious rat-catcher had more than once invited the visitor to step in and admire the graceful proportions and the wonderful agility of some fine rats that he kept in a cage; and a diminutive sweep, all unconscious of the disgust which the condition of his tea-table had excited, invited her to join him to a cup of tea, which she had so much of the mind of Him who ate with publicans and sinners, as to suppress the inclination to decline.

The workers had found much to gratify and encourage, but had not yet seen those specific results so ardently sought. In their view nothing was satisfactory that stopped short of conversion. Yet might not something have been going on which they had not eyes to see? Was it not possible that the seed sown long ago was still silently germinating; that already the blade was creeping upward towards the surface; and that the time was not distant when many living plants would simultaneously display themselves? So it may be presumed the labourers hoped; and, free from tormenting solicitude, they slept and rose, content that the seed should grow they knew not how.

And grow it did, as it always will if men will but trust it; and at length the blade suddenly shot forth. Service had been held as usual one Sunday evening, and the little congregation was preparing to disperse, when an after meeting was proposed. "You have heard of conversions, of the new life, and of such a thing as peace in believing," said Miss Macarthy. "Now, I and my two sisters here with me know that these things are real; and if you will stay a little longer we will tell you how we know it. But," she added, "I must request the men to withdraw. As we are women who desire to speak, we should prefer

to have only women for our hearers." "You won't, though," said two or three young fellows, tartly. "If you turn us out, we'll take care that nobody else shall hear; and we won't come to your meeting again." "Very well; you know what we propose: let as many of you remain as desire to do so."

They resumed their seats, and the three severally told the people calmly, simply, naturally, and in a few words how they once were pierced with a sense of sin; and how, as they trustingly and submissively looked to Jesus as their Saviour, and surrendered themselves to Him, the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto them; and how, in a sense which they could not explain, their fellowship was now with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ. A word or two of exhortation were subjoined, and, as the closing act, the ladies knelt down to pray, the people generally retaining their seats.

The scene which followed will never be forgotten. No sound of a rushing mighty wind was heard, and no tongues of fire were seen; but God was as truly, and, though in a different manner, as manifestly present in that humble dwelling as once in an "upper room" in Jerusalem. None can describe the sense of awe which suddenly

came over every mind. There was no excitement, no noise, no commotion, no extravagance. One firm but gentle and plaintive voice was heard in earnest supplication; all else was perfect stillness; even as

> ". . . When in heaven the stars about the moon
> Look beautiful, when all the winds are laid;"

yet there was not a soul in that room that had not become conscious of the presence and working of some mysterious influence. At length strange sounds began to break forth; first a loud convulsive breathing, as of somebody labouring to restrain an outburst of strong feeling; then whisperings of interjectory prayer, amidst abrupt sobs and suppressed cries of distress. The voice of intercession ceased, and rising from their knees, the visitors found the people in a state of bewilderment, each gazing wildly on the rest, and the same question on every lip—"What's the matter?" The ladies themselves were taken by surprise, and were almost alarmed. One young man they found standing by himself in a corner of the room in a state of unconscious abstraction, as if incapable of speech or motion. *Twenty* persons were that night simultaneously convinced of the bitterness of sin; and, covered with shame, and confusion, they sank to the ground, inquiring

in dismay, "What must I do to be saved?" *Twenty persons* who had lived in debasing debauchery and crime, some of them the most licentious, intemperate, and violent in the whole neighbourhood! To each, personally, the visitors now began to speak words of sympathy and encouragement, striving to guide them to the exercise of that faith by which we are saved. Then, one by one, they rose to their feet, their countenances strangely softened; their hearts melted with love and their mouths filled with thanksgiving and praise.

There are people who suppose they have sufficiently accounted for phenomena such as these, when they have ascribed them to fanaticism, to the power of natural sympathy, to some psychological illusion, or to some other natural cause. To these I have nothing to say here in the way of refutation. My business at present is to state undeniable facts, not to argue theories. I believe the only satisfactory explanation to be that which has been unhesitatingly assumed throughout—namely, the actual and direct operations of the Holy Spirit on the hearts and consciences of the persons affected; operations which had been long secretly going on in connection with the preaching of the Gospel, but which were now brought to a sudden crisis. This, moreover, is the only expla-

nation which agrees with the subsequent character of the people. The tree is known by its fruit, and these twenty were indisputably the subjects of a moral reformation. They became living epistles known and read of all men.

VII.

Safeguards and Helps.

WITH springing steps on the very night of this great manifestation, Miss Macarthy hasted to the house of the Rev. John Scott, then the Superintendent Minister of the City Road Circuit, to communicate the welcome intelligence. Mr. Scott listened with his wonted sobriety; made further enquiries, as he had opportunity; satisfied his understanding that the people reported to him had become really changed; and, dealing with them as "catechumens" were dealt with in the early church, he formed them into a "class," and, with the concurrence of "the Leaders' Meeting," appointed Miss Macarthy their "Leader." This office she has now held for more than twenty years; and during this period how many has she been the means of fortifying against the assaults of temptations; of strengthening to bear with meekness domestic and other persecution; of encouraging to endure hardships as good soldiers; of training to habits of "righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience!" How many who

have already joined the Church triumphant in heaven: and how many more who are this day in situations of social respectability and trust, and members of the Church in this land; or, having emigrated with their families to distant colonies, are there adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things! Fifty names now stand on her books: and from the first not fewer than *five hundred* persons have been thus immediately under her care!

New converts, even though their outward condition be favourable to their stability, are in the utmost need of the counsels and aids of experience, and are always ready to grasp at them when offered. It has been supposed, from certain observations, that "under many circumstances the magnetic needle, even after the disturbing influence has been removed, will continue wavering, and require many days before it points aright, and remains steady to the pole. So is it ordinarily with the soul, after it has begun to free itself from the disturbing forces of the flesh, and the world, and to turn itself towards God." And not only so; but there is always a danger lest while the affections are settling into habits of steady exercise towards God, they should be again warped by the action of those "disturbing forces" from which they had begun to be released. The magnitude of this

danger, in the case of uneducated people who had previously lived in open vice, and whose conversion has been comparatively sudden, it is scarcely possible to over-estimate. In all such cases there is a terrible liability to defection; and great is the Church's responsibility for the use of suitable means to preserve from it. Not only must the excitement under which the great change has been produced, and by which the soul may for a time be sustained in its conflict with evil, gradually subside, but, unless duly watched against and withstood, a reaction will set in, under the influence of old worldly and sinful associations, with the most deadly force and rapidity. Let no one say that if the change is Divinely wrought and real, it must be lasting. The condition of the Church of Corinth at least, not to adduce the apostacies in the Churches of Galatia, and not to urge the probability that the persons described in the Epistle to the Hebrews (ch. vi.) as having so fallen away that it was impossible to renew them again unto repentance, included some of the three thousand who were converted on the day of Pentecost, ought to be enough to show how unauthorized and fallacious is the notion that converted men can never turn again to the "old sins" from which they had been "purged."

According to the teaching of the New Testa-

ment, new converts are as "little children," feeble, impulsive, and very liable to go wrong; and it is the imperative duty of the Church to take them under its most tender vigilance and care; to use every available means to nourish the new life on which they have entered; to instruct, educate, and discipline them, and as far as possible shield them from the assaults of evil.

For all these purposes, I believe no institution of modern times has been found so directly efficacious as the class-meeting. To the most advanced Christian, an institution so naturally tending to promote brotherly love and confidence, to lead to habits of self-examination, and to call forth sympathy and prayer one for another, cannot but be highly advantageous. But its value to "babes" in Christ, and anxious inquirers after salvation, as a help to their steadfastness, or as a means of encouragement and guidance, is inestimable. This it would be easy to prove by an induction of facts supplied by the experience of now more than a hundred years. "In a few months," says Mr. Wesley, speaking of a period when class-meetings were rather of the nature of an experiment than of a settled institution, "the far greater part of those who had begun to 'fear God and work righteousness,' but were not united together, grew faint in their minds, *and fell back into what*

they were before. Meanwhile the far greater part of those who were thus united together, continued 'striving to enter in at the strait gate' and to 'lay hold on eternal life.'"

Yet the class-meeting, like almost everything else in the organization of Methodism, was entirely unpremeditated. A few anxious penitents, "with none to strengthen their hands in God" came to Mr. Wesley to solicit his advice and prayers; and as they increased in numbers beyond his own ability to deal with them, he was led to divide them into little companies or classes, to each of which he appointed some suitable person as the Leader.

Now the first duty of the Leader is "*to see each person in his class once a week at the least.*" At first he was required to visit each "at his own house. But this was soon found not so expedient;" and therefore a time was fixed when they might all come together. But this was a mere matter of arrangement; the principle remaining the same, that each person should be seen weekly or oftener,—his absence from the meeting being an additional reason why he should be seen,—"in order to enquire how their souls prosper, to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require."

So the Leader of the Chequer Alley class understood the duty of her office; and to her conscientious observance of this duty is to be ascribed in

great part her remarkable success. She never forgot how mighty were the corrupting influences to which her charge would necessarily be exposed; how ready they might be at the approach of trial to shrink back from the hard conflicts, the self-denial, and cross-bearing to which true discipleship to Christ called them; how tormenting and even perilous would be the vibrations from acts of wickedness long past, which would continue to reach and play upon their moral feelings; she knew that without the stimulus and help of a most vigilant personal guardianship they would be in perpetual liability to err and fall away; and she resolved that nothing should be wanting on her part to secure their fidelity. So frequently was her slender figure seen flitting about from court to court, often as late as ten or eleven o'clock at night, to see that those most subject to temptation continued to "quit" themselves "like men," that she came to be commonly spoken of in the neighbourhood as "*the Chequer Alley Ghost;*" and so great was the awe with which her character inspired the inhabitants generally, that even the most desperate would submit to her influence. Once when passing a public-house, a poor woman was found standing outside bitterly weeping and bearing a child in her arms. "My husband," she said, "is spending his money in drink, while I and

the children want bread." And, she added, "if I were to ask him to come home he would knock me down." Taking the baby out of the mother's arms, the visitor walked into the tap-room, touched the man on the shoulder, and bade him follow her; nor did she leave him, till, at his own fire-side, he confessed his weakness and sin, and promised amendment. The same thing in substance has occurred in many instances.*

Having diverged a little from the course of my narrative, it may not be out of place, and I hope it will not be deemed an impropriety, to give the reader a momentary glance at a Chequer Alley class-meeting in its present character and constitution. Of course I shall omit names; but the reader may rely on the strict accuracy of each detail of the description.

I will suppose him to accompany me on a visit to the Sunday afternoon class. It is held in the room occupied by one of the members, a widow, whose husband died in the Lord on the bed which

* The influence of each of the co-workers over that strange creature, already once or twice referred to as the *wife* of the rat-catcher who lived in the room adjoining that in which the service was held, was something quite extraordinary. One evening on being disturbed by a group of riotous boys, Miss Taylor stepped out and found the woman sitting on the floor with her legs sprawling out before her, and a large yellow dish on her lap out of which she was eating her supper. The boys had irritated her, and she was foaming with rage; but a word from her friend transformed her into meekness itself.

you will find on your left. You climb two steep and narrow staircases, and, opening the door at the top, find yourself in the presence of about fifteen or sixteen persons, two or three of them being men. A hymn having been sung and prayer offered, the Leader stands, and in a calm and natural tone delivers her own testimony. She knows that some of them have much to endure, are greatly tried, and often "suffer being tempted;" and she sympathizes with them for she also "is compassed with infirmity." But it is their common privilege to look to Jesus who succours the tempted; who is to all His faithful disciples an Almighty Helper and Guardian.

The members now speak in turn. The first has been in the class some years; and you are hearing the recital, as her very manner and every sentence convince you, of an "old disciple." She cannot doubt that she is a child of God, for hers is the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father. But she is increasingly troubled about her many failures and defects.

This is substantially the statement of two or three others; each however, referring to something peculiar. One in infirm health, says, "I seem to get on much better when I attend the means of grace; yet I am never left to myself, in seasons of affliction, when confined to my room."

Another says, "The strongest desire of my heart is to please God. This I can truly testify; though too often my conscience tells me I might do better." Another, in touching simplicity, "I bless God that I am as happy as I can be. I hope to meet all my dear class-mates, and you, Mrs. 'Carty, in heaven."

This last is the utterance of a man a little beyond middle life. Sometime ago he had a son in the Sunday-school who, after long-continued entreaty, succeeding in bringing him to the public service. After this, he came time after time on his own accord, then began to evince a consciousness of his state of sin and helplessness, and ultimately obtained a sense of reconciliation to God. For many years he was a sailor,—as bold and reckless a man as ever traversed the sea. He now lives in a garret, and is as blithe and happy as the livelong day.

A poor woman now declares her determination to serve God, and obey her conscience at all hazards. "But," she adds, "nobody knows what I have to suffer. I am single-handed, and hedged round with difficulties." Two years ago she stood with her husband every Sunday morning, where he may still be seen, behind a stall in Whitecross street. But having been induced to come to the preaching room on Sunday evenings, she was after-

wards solicited to attend morning service at City-road. This she pleaded was impossible; for her husband demanded her assistance at the stall. Would she come if her husband gave consent? demanded her present Leader. Then let her prepare next Sunday, and they would see. The favour was asked in her name and, though very surlily, was granted. They walked together to the Chapel in St. John's Square, and there under a sermon preached by the Rev. Charles Prest, she became conscience-smitten and filled with painful solicitude. Returning home she begged her husband to excuse her future attendance at the stall; and, in reply to his remonstrance, said she would willingly fast every Sunday to compensate for any loss of custom through her absence. Earnestly seeking, she soon obtained a consciousness of Divine forgiveness; and the words you have just heard represent her present experience.

The next who speaks is a single woman living with her brother, who declares himself an Atheist. She is obliged to say, "Mine is not a very happy home. I am frequently called hard names because of my connection with the Church, and I fear I am not as forbearing as I ought to be." She is followed by one who says, "I am much depressed at times in remembrance of my past life. Forty years I lived in sin. How wonderful that I should

be forgiven! How thankful I am that I ever came to the room and afterwards was led to your class!"

A strange history has been that of the young man in the corner, whose turn next it is to speak! May God preserve him from ever taking a single step in the direction of that which casts so dark a shadow over the past! Through the blessing of God on the persistent efforts of that saintly woman who is now striving to strengthen him in goodness, he is not only well conducted morally, but has a fair prospect of doing well in the world. Only a year or two ago, however, he was one of the dirtiest, wildest, most ragged, and reckless young fellows in the Alley. He speaks modestly, as well he may! He says, "I ask the Lord daily that I may die unto sin. Nobody knows how much I love Him; and shockingly sinful as I have been, I trust that He loves me."

There is another to speak,—the mother of the last,—though her name is not inscribed in the book. Indeed she has only attended a few weeks; and the Leader has not deemed it advisable as yet to regard her as even "on trial." She hangs her head, and speaks weeping; and these are her very words: "The Lord has been very good to me. *I'm much obliged to Him, I am sure!* To think that I, who ought to have been an example

to my children, should be first brought here by my own son! Oh! I am very sinful! Can I ever be forgiven!"

Each case the reader must suppose to be met by suitable advice, admonition, encouragement, or caution; and I may now add that the sentences within the marks of quotation are with one or two exceptions *verbally* transcribed from notes quietly taken by myself on a casual and unexpected visit.

VIII.

Further Progress and its Embarrassments.

THE genuineness of the conversion of the first twenty was soon put to the severest test. Returning to their homes on that memorable night, some weeping, and some rejoicing, they were immediately called to endure "the reproach of Christ." Their "friends" said of them as others had said of Him whom they could now call their Lord, "They are 'beside' themselves." They were denounced "Religious fools;" were greeted with contemptuous and loathsome epithets, and were threatened with personal violence. Nor was this all. They were not only required "to take up" their "cross" but in some of the most severe forms to "deny themselves." "Some," to quote the words of the first printed Report (1849), "had to abandon guilty connections, and forsake habits long formed, although their abandonment involved a great amount of self-denial, and even pecuniary loss; for the profits derived from the vilest practices of dishonesty and profligacy had to be relinquished; and they were reduced, under the

greatest disadvantages to the necessity of labouring with their own hands to provide things 'honest in the sight of all men.'"

To all this, however, they showed the utmost readiness to subject themselves, and nothing more was required on the part of their friends than to keep them under the power of right and strong motives. But in regard to two or three things it was found the conscience had yet to be instructed.

One of these was the obligation of the marriage compact. It will be a surprise to readers unacquainted with the habits of the classes to which these people belonged, to learn that in general they attach little or no importance to marriage, either as a solemn religious institution or as a legal contract; and that among them it is practically, to a great extent, disregarded. Speaking of costermongers, a painstaking writer says, "Only one tenth—*at the outside one-tenth*—of the couples living together are married. . . There is no honour attaching to the state of marriage; and no shame to concubinage."* But the duty had only to be pointed out where hitherto neglected, to meet with the most prompt and willing compliance. And a grotesque and affecting sight it was when couple after couple, already the parents

* Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*, (1865) p. 22.

of families, came forward in penitent acknowledgment of their sin, pledging themselves to mutual love and honour, and returning to their humble homes raised in their own, and in each other's esteem, with manifestations of affection for their children, and of interest in their welfare, which the little ones themselves greeted with wonder.

Another thing on which they required special instruction was the obligation to keep holy the Christian Sabbath. Nor was there any reluctance to comply with this when explained to them as a duty; though in some instances its observance was attended with great difficulty. One woman was obliged, she said, in order to avoid the desecration of the Lord's day, to sit up and work *till six o'clock on Sunday morning!*

But in every condition of difficulty, temptation, or opposition, their never-failing help and refuge was the weekly class-meeting. There they were always nerved

> "To abide
> The shock, and finally secure
> O'er pain and grief a triumph pure."

There they could freely relieve their oppressed spirits by speaking their sorrows, confer with each other in mutual and loving sympathy; strengthen each other's hands, bear each other's burdens, and pray one for another; their Leader

administering to each the most fitting counsel and consolation; instructing and stimulating them, according to the pattern of St. Paul's Epistles, with the facts of her own experience, and watching over them "even as a nurse cherisheth her children."

Nor did she fail at once to teach them, that it is a right and "blessed" thing for all, poor no less than rich, "to give," according to their means, for the spread of religion around them. She knew that they were all in that state of "extreme poverty", which the "Rules" except from the obligation to present the weekly and quarterly offering; and, actuated by a mistaken benevolence, she might have excused their contributions. But she knew, on the other hand, that this would certainly be to withhold from them a personal gratification; for even

> "The poorest poor
> Long for some moments in a weary life,
> When they can know and feel that they have been
> * * * * * * the dealers out
> Of some small blessings."

Believing, moreover, that to give, even of their little, would be a useful mode of self-discipline, a help to the formation of habits of economy, and a test and proper exercise of spiritual principle, she not only encouraged them to do so, but, to meet their peculiar circumstances of poverty, aided

them by introducing the practice which she still observes, of taking a penny or halfpenny from each, as they were best able to spare it, and at the end of the quarter returning to them the sum of these small and occasional givings, to be presented by themselves at the renewal of their quarterly tickets.

"It now became necessary," says the above-cited Report, "to enlarge our borders in order to meet the increased desire manifested to hear and be instructed in the word of God. A larger room could not be obtained; it was therefore necessary to take a house, and form the two lower rooms into one." This was done in 1846, and the Report adds, "the present crowded state of the school fully justifies the step that was taken."

In 1851, the school is reported to have come under the management of a new and more influential Committee; which, however, had hardly entered upon its work before it felt its energies fettered through the lack of suitable accommodation. "It can well be imagined," the Report for that year complains, "that the room in which we now assemble, close and low, blocked up in front by a dead wall within five feet from the door, and infested with strong and nauseous smells, so far from being adapted to further our purpose, is powerfully calculated to hinder it; and will our

kind friends believe that for our little more than weekly accommodation in such a place as this we have to raise the sum of ten pounds eight shillings per annum."

During this year the poor children of the school subscribed six shillings and sixpence *in farthings* for the support of Missions to the Heathen; and some of the members of the senior class are said to have given good evidence of conversion to God. It is stated also that the members of the "Church" so "largely composed of those who were amongst the worst of their class, continue to stand forth as monuments of Divine mercy, that none need be discouraged by reason of their vileness." This year, too, open air preaching was resumed, and attended with success.

The good plant had at length reached a stage of growth at which the cultivators felt it to be an absolute duty in order to its continued healthy expansion to transplant it into a more commodious nursery. The great want which they now felt was more working-space. Beginning in the apparently insignificant agency of tract distribution by two earnest and godly women, the work had advanced gradually, aided and shaped by providential circumstances, till it had become so vast in its dimensions and so complete in its complex organization, as to demand some suitable and

seemly external accommodation. Here was a regular congregation of hearers, composed like other congregations, partly of true and spiritual worshippers, partly of persons waking up to a consciousness of religious wants and obligations, some seeing men as trees walking, some penitently craving spiritual instruction and guidance; and partly of persons prompted by curiosity or some other unspiritual motive, but who it was fondly hoped, though they "came to mock," might "remain to pray." And here also was a Sunday-school, consisting of nearly a hundred poor children, under the regular management of a Committee and a staff of efficient teachers; and the only accommodation for both congregation and school, was a room about seven feet high, constructed and situated as stated in the above-cited extract of the *Report*.

It was precisely at this point that by some means a suitable school-chapel should have been provided *on the spot*. No change in the machinery was necessary, and it would have been a great mistake to attempt to remove it off the ground, to some supposed more eligible locality. The people of that and of all similar neighbourhoods, must have the educational and religious advantages you desire them to enjoy *brought within their own district* and offered to them in buildings of

such a character as they prefer to enter; not stately structures adapted to the taste of the refined and fastidious, with lofty spires and pointed arches; but rooms of a comparatively humble appearance, yet well-warmed, well-lighted, and well-ventilated. Had a room of this kind been built in Chequer Alley at the period at which we have arrived, it is impossible to doubt that the progress of the work would have been greatly accelerated, and its power and influence rapidly increased. But unhappily the fresh impulse it had just received was in great part arrested, and the new and more vigorous effort thrown into it was largely baffled and defeated for the single want of more room for action. And, as life when its growth is impeded naturally languishes, it would have been in agreement with the usual course of things if it had been my duty from this point to speak of gradual declension and decay. Providentially this is not so; and the degree of prosperity with which the work continued to be favoured is to be ascribed to two causes which have next to be described: namely, first the direction of this pent-up energy of the original workers into another channel; and secondly the increase of accommodation which the new Committee obtained by the expedient of taking other similar rooms and dividing the school into three separate sections.

IX.

Little Children.

"THE education of these children is such only as the streets afford; and the streets teach them for the most part,—and in greater or less degrees,—acuteness—a precocious acuteness—in all that concerns their immediate wants, business, or gratifications; a patient endurance of cold and hunger; a desire to obtain money without working for it; a craving for the excitement of gambling; an inordinate love of amusement; and an irrepressible repugnance to any settled indoor industry."*

All this was painfully evident to the observant workers who took the lead in the benevolent enterprise before us. But they were not less deeply impressed and affected by the condition of the little ones in the earlier and preparatory stages of this "education." It was sad to witness their physical sufferings, but infinitely more so to see the ignorance, immorality, and savageness in which

* Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*, p. 25.

they were just rising into life; and looking into the future, to contemplate the necessary results of their training, both to themselves and society around them. Was it to be wondered at that the little creatures whom they saw treated by their parents as brutes; sent to sleep on filthy mattrasses on the floor; driven shivering into the Alley and streets, scantily covered with dirty rags; fed with unwholesome food, strewed for them in pieces over a dirty table, or more commonly thrown to them as they crouched in the chimney-corner,—should hereafter manifest nothing beyond mere animal instincts? Was it to be expected that any noble or properly human quality should spring to life in conditions such as these? Would it not be strange if those whose tender years were uncheered by hope, and unblessed by love and kindness, should ever hereafter display a worthy self-respect, and a character softened and ennobled by affection? And was it to be supposed that they who gathered the most confused notions of the rights of property in childhood, should practically respect those rights in after-life?

For a single fortnight Miss Macarthy kept a journal; and here is one of its many pictures of misery:—"Found in one room three little children, one of them an infant in the arms of the eldest, a boy who appeared to be *about six years*

old, and who was crying bitterly with toothache. The dirt and filth in which they are living are frightful. No wonder cholera and fever prevail. No father or mother was near; the poor children did not even know where they were! I did my best to soothe the dear little sufferer with kind words, and although so young, he tried to be more calm. How my heart ached! I saw that I could do no more than breathe a prayer to God to help them; and left the dear children with the promise to call again."

One day in November, 1852, when describing to a friend some such scene as this, the conversation turned on Mr. Wesley's Free Day School, and the benefits which so poor and miserable a neighbourhood as Chequer Alley would derive from a similar institution. "For how many children did Mr. Wesley provide?" was enquired. "About sixty; but it would be vain for us to attempt to feed and clothe any portion of such a number, as Mr. Wesley did; or to engage qualified masters, and pay them a suitable salary, as he also did. My belief is," continued Miss Macarthy, "that my class would supply a competent teacher who would gladly take charge of sixty children, and give them a little elementary instruction, which is all we must contemplate." "And for what amount of remuneration would she under-

take this duty?" "I should think for six shillings a week." "Then," said the friend, whose name is unknown to this day, except to the person addressed, "you have a room at command; if you will procure the services of a trustworthy teacher I will be answerable for the cost, and you may depend on me for this amount as long as I live, and you require it." The offer was accepted, and with fresh energy and heart the new project was immediately carried out.

Among many other residents in the Alley, whose curiosity had been roused by the movements of Miss Macarthy and her associates, was a woman of remarkably intelligent expression, and of a commanding figure, the mother of three children, who, having come up from the country, had by some means been drifted with her family into this, to her, but too congenial locality. In her personal habits she was greatly superior to her neighbours; she could read and write well, was endowed with untiring energy, and had a peculiarly strong and musical voice, but continued to abandon herself to a life of sin. This woman was attracted to the preaching-room; soon gave signs of deepest conviction, and was eventually led to join the class. She had now been in Society some time, and had given satisfactory evidence of a complete change of character; but

was in abject poverty and distress. It was agreed to ask her to take the office of teacher, allowing her to include her own three children in the number of sixty ; and the offer, with its weekly allowance of six shillings, being eagerly accepted by her as a providential boon, the Free Day School, a "Refuge for Destitute Children," as it has been fitly called, was forthwith begun.

About twelve months later the offer to afford similar advantages to another group of sixty children was made by a gentleman, who was led by tidings he had heard of the proceedings in the Alley to visit and inspect the school, and was impressed with its great value. This offer also was gladly accepted; and the class supplying another Teacher, a second school was opened in a kitchen engaged for this purpose, and for the purposes of an Infant Sunday School, in the court adjoining the room already in use.

Very unpretending have these little seminaries been, yet, perhaps, not less adapted to the requirements of the children they were designed to benefit than would have been schools of a higher grade. The utmost they have sought to teach of a secular character is the *rudiments* of reading, writing, and accounts. Yet it was something to ameliorate the physical condition of the little ones whom they gathered in from the courts and gutters,

and to whom they afforded shelter and warmth; it was something to protect them for a few hours each day from ill-usage, and to subject them to the softening and cherishing influences of judicious kindness; it was something to check the formation of bad habits, and to shield them for a time from the corrupting power of evil associations; and it was also something to create a sense of the comfort and decency of cleanliness; for those children whose parents could not be induced to send them with clean faces and hands, the Teachers were required to subject to a thorough ablution and combing before the proper duties of the school began.

But the great and special object of the institution was to quicken and inform the dormant conscience of the little ones for whom it undertook to care, to fan to a flame the latent spark of human feeling in their hearts; to wake up and develop their moral powers; to introduce spiritual truth into their understandings, and teach to them their relation to God and an unseen world;—*to bring them to Christ.*

And by what means were these higher ends sought to be attained? "Not by might nor by power" of which man is the source. Nothing could be more simple than the school machinery brought into action; and very circumscribed was the range of daily duty to be observed. Having ascertained

that each child was as clean and tidy as possible, a suitable hymn was sung and a few words of prayer offered, which the children were taught to repeat simultaneously after the Teacher. Little picture-books and slates were then distributed; each child in turn received a short lesson, the rest being allowed to amuse themselves in silence while it was given, by looking at pictures or trying to draw them on their slates; and the remainder of the time was spent in relieving muscular exercises, with occasional singing, and in hearing from the Teacher recitals of little stories. Perhaps the pleasantest half hour of the day was that in which she sat in the midst of her charge with her work in her hands, picturing to them in homely and impressive words some of the scenes in the history of Jesus; conducting them to the stable at Bethlehem, within the courts of the Temple, or to the Sea of Galilee; or more than all, labouring to impress on their wondering minds how He who condescended to mingle with men as Himself a man, and to shew forth His glory by many strange and benevolent works, did at length "humble Himself" for the salvation of the world, "unto death, even the death of the Cross."

Nor had the Teachers ability to wield any more cumbrous instrument. They were both women of sense; they could both read,—one of them could

read and write well,—and they were both beyond doubt sincerely godly. But beyond this, their qualifications for the business of school-teaching were of the humblest order. Perhaps for this very reason their reliance was the more implicit on a Wisdom and a Power superior to their own. Had they reckoned only on their own resources, a true impression of the difficulties of the work before them would assuredly have caused them to shrink from it in hopelessness. But their trust was in God; and sustained and guided by this unfailing principle, their efforts were soon attended with the most gratifying success.

A single fact may here be stated in illustration; —a fact for the consideration of the philosopher no less than the Christian.

The children who composed the later formed of the two schools were, when first gathered in, some of the most shockingly depraved and troublesome in the Alley. They were passionate, obstinate, and in the habitual use of foul and profane speech. Strangers to the least discipline, and subject to the continuous action of every corrupt influence, as they had always been, the attempt to bring them under subjection to rule was resisted and resented with a kind of resolute scorn. For a time their turbulence was comparatively bearable, especially as it was hoped that, though it

might, be a work of time, yet, by degrees, order would be at length established. But the Teacher found to her dismay that the tendency was in the contrary direction, and that the whole school was becoming more and more unmanageable. One day the children seemed to have come together in a spirit of more determined rebellion than ever. The room became a scene of riotous uproar. The boys shot marbles, fought, and swore; and the girls screamed and giggled. The Teacher's patience no less than her skill was tried to the utmost. What was she to do? Her authority was set at utter defiance; severity she had no desire to use, and could not have used with safety to herself; and to have dispersed the school would have been a declaration of incompetence and powerlessness, fatal to any future effort.

Other means failing, she sought to reach the reason through the sanctions of religion, spoke of the displeasure of God, and called their attention to the sentiments of a hymn she had lately taught them, and in which they seemed at the time to take some interest, beginning,—

> "Saviour round Thy footstool bending
> See this youthful band appear."

But all continued stubbornly boisterous. Feeling that her resources had been taxed to the utmost, and yet that she must conquer or abandon her post

in despair, she sank to the floor on her knees involuntarily, and began to implore the interposition of God Himself: "Lord whose I am, and whom I serve! Wilt Thou be pleased to put forth Thy power on behalf of Thy helpless handmaid, and for the honour of Thy name!" While thus pleading, the storm suddenly subsided; and retaining the attitude of prayer, she began to supplicate with increased fervour the bestowment then and there of the converting grace of God: "Thou canst turn the hearts of these children to Thee; for hast Thou not so turned *my* heart? I desire that they should come to Thee; but how much more dost *Thou* desire to receive them!" There was perfect silence while she thus continued to pray, silence which after the previous outburst was deeply impressive. But not many moments passed, when she felt two tiny arms entwined round her neck, and heard the words spoken in her ears in broken accents and intermittent sobs, "*Oh, teacher! I's so wicked! Teacher, teacher, we will be good! we will be good!*"

That scene was a precious turning point. The Teacher's authority was then and thenceforth completely established; rule and order rose to supremacy; and the school since that moment has been a pattern of good conduct.

Nor is this all.—

> "Some feelings are to mortals given
> With less of earth in them than heaven;
> And if there is a human tear,
> From passion's dross refined and clear"—

it must surely be that which gushes from the eye of a penitent child. This child was not more than seven years old; but that she came at that moment under a power which drew her to Christ for salvation, was never doubted by those competent to judge, who had the opportunity of witnessing her subsequent spirit and behaviour. But she was taken to an early rest. After living a year or two, as though to shew how beautiful a thing conversion of heart in a little child is, she was seized with a mortal sickness. Just before her death she said to her parents, and the friends connected with the school, who stood around her with tokens of sorrow, "Let not your hearts be troubled. . . . In my Father's house are many mansions; and Jesus has gone to prepare a place for you as well as for me." Then, requesting all to kneel down and join her in repeating the Lord's Prayer, her spirit "leaped the bounds of time," and she "fell asleep."

Henceforth these little Free Day-schools became centres of moral influence, which acted with greater or less force on the whole neighbourhood.

The change in the character of the children was manifest to all. Their benevolent affections, hitherto unnaturally chilled and suppressed, began to display themselves in their intercourse with each other in countless little deeds of kindness. Some who were half famished were seen to offer a share of a piece of bread that was given them to others as needy as themselves. The expression of sullenness and dejection which had previously characterized them, became a thing unknown. Their very sports assumed a sunnier aspect; and their laugh lost its accustomed leaden tone. The simple songs which they were taught to sing at school, they loved to repeat at home; and often on a summer evening, groups of rough men and women were to be seen standing together and listening with evident delight to the sweet sounds produced by the silvery voices of two or three children as they sat and sung in concert on a door-step. The schools naturally came more and more into favour. Many more children sought admission than the rooms would contain; and, unwilling to turn any away who desired its advantages, the Teachers at one time actually crowded into the rooms thirty-one more than the stipulated number. The influence of this change was immediately felt in the Sunday School, which not only became more orderly, but rose to a

higher grade of knowledge; so that, to state the testimony of the present Superintendent, "whereas the hours of the Sunday had been previously spent in teaching the alphabet, or at the most words of two or three letters, the attainments of the children were soon on a level with those of Sunday-schools in general." The public services also became better attended. Parents, moved by the entreaties of their children, came to hear the Gospel who had never before been inside a place of worship in their lives, and afterwards attended regularly. And from these humble Day-schools, supported at a cost of less than forty pounds a year, and taught by two poor women, who themselves have been rescued, through this charitable effort, from a state of extreme depravity and baseness; *hundreds* of children whose prior training was fitting them only for beggary, theft, and prostitution, have gone to fill situations of trust, and to be a service and a blessing to society, instead of what they must otherwise have become, a pest and a curse.

In closing this account of the Free Day-schools, I may mention, to show the extraordinary effort which this work has demanded and obtained for its support, that for successive winters, the funds required to supply the schools with firing, have been raised by the sale of verses composed

by Miss Macarthy, and published for this object. One of these modest poems, is put forth as "A case of Common Pleas: Coals *versus* Cold." Another is entitled, "An Appeal for 'Some of the Least,' by one of their friends, who wishes you a Merrie Christmas and a happy New Year."

X.

Sunday School Teaching.

"THE harvest truly plenteous" and "the labourers" no longer "few," but, as sent forth by "the Lord of the harvest," associated on the very spot in large force, equipped for service and eager to enter on their work;—such had become the condition of things as related to the Chequer Alley mission at the period at which we have now arrived. An able, judicious, and energetic man had accepted the office of Sunday-school Superintendent; and under him were arrayed a body of sixteen teachers, besides recognised visitors and other officers: the arrangements for the Day-school had become singularly efficient and successful; the Sunday evening services were numerously attended; and the Society-classes, notwithstanding frequent removals to other neighbourhoods, were continuously growing. Yet all this varied agency and its appliances, and this whole collection of material so ready to be wrought upon, had still to be confined within

the same baffling limits;—there was still no increase of accommodation.

Now, though energy directed by a true faith, and having scope for effort, will not fail through opposition, inconvenience, or the delay of success; yet, checked and balked for want of scope and area, its natural tendency is to retire within itself and become inoperative and inert. Happily in this instance the agents, instead of yielding to discouragement, began to consider by what contrivances they could best adapt themselves to their unavoidable condition. The result is thus expressed in the *Report* for 1855: "Two years ago your Committee were encouraged to hope they would be sustained in an effort to obtain a new building for the evening service and schools. Various difficulties however arose, and they were obliged to content themselves first, by adding another floor—removing the party-wall—and fitting it up with the necessary apparatus for school purposes. During the past year, a room in an adjoining house has been hired for the accommodation of the infant classes on Sunday—and still our school is too small for the children, our preaching-room for the people."

As there were now three rooms, that on the ground-floor, to be used as before for one of the Free Day-schools, for the public service, and, in

future, for the boys of the Sunday-school; the corresponding room on the second floor, to be appropriated to the girls; and the kitchen in the adjoining court, to be used for the infants on Sunday, as well as for the second Free Day-school,—the people again took heart and sent their children in such numbers, that the workers were almost as much embarrassed as ever. All the space put together amounted to only five times the size of a working man's ordinary "living-room," yet in 1855 the numbers on the Secretary's books swelled to 216. In 1858 the Committee report 221 names on their books, and with mingled satisfaction and sadness state that "operations have been extended to the full extent of the means and accommodation. The preaching-room is crowded to excess. The Sunday-school is more than full, and teachers are not wanting."

If the reader is ever tempted to plead the difficulties of his position in excuse for ceasing to labour for usefulness, let him call to mind the circumstances of inconvenience and discouragement in which the good work in Chequer Alley has been carried on up to this very day,—for the accommodation is still precisely what it was in 1855,—and let him take fresh courage, throw his soul more wholly into his work, trust in God, and

assure himself that in due time he will reap if he faint not!

Having described the conditions under which the work continues to be prosecuted, a few words may be added on the character of the teaching which schools of this peculiar constitution require; and the remainder of this section shall be occupied with the statement of one or two unlooked-for or specially encouraging examples of usefulness.

The point to which it is right to advert in regard to the character of the teaching is that it ought to be kept at the utmost possible distance from harshness, dullness and gloom. Let the Teacher enter upon his work from a real attachment to it, and a sincere love for the poor uncared-for ones he desires to benefit; let him at once endeavour to win the affections of his class, and establish a personal influence over it; let him spare no pains to render his instruction intelligible by the use of plain and homely words and natural illustrations; let him strive to quicken the reasoning powers and sustain the attention by well chosen questions; but especially let him throw over all his work an air of unaffected benignity and cheerfulness. All this is necessary in order to render Sunday-school teaching effective for its proper ends even when carried on in the most favourable conditions;

but it is peculiarly necessary in the case of children belonging to the classes of which we are speaking.

It is a mistake to deal with these children as though their powers of discrimination and thought were as yet altogether unquickened into action. Harsh usage at home and sharp-witted companionships in the streets, have effectually dispelled sluggishness of apprehension. And it is equally an error to appeal, on trivial occasions to awful realities hereafter. A well-meaning friend who paid a visit to the School one Sunday, was requested to favour it with a short address. While discoursing in a way which failed to interest, an intelligent boy about seven years old, who sat immediately before him, was restless and impatient. The speaker paused and reproved him, then continued to prose as before; perhaps saying something unquestionably good and true, but saying it in a manner which conveyed no ideas and excited no feeling. The boy grew more restless than ever, and the speaker, looking him sternly in the face spoke in terms of deliberate solemnity about the punishment which awaits sinners in another life, adding, "Suppose I should light a candle and hold your finger in the flame; would not that give you great pain?" "*Why*," rejoined the boy in perfect composure, "*I should blow it out.*"

The effect of the incident was bad; not only to the boy himself, but to the whole school; and the speaker had better been silent.

The general teaching of the school has been widely different. The Teachers have looked more deeply into the workings of a child's heart, have spoken more directly to his understanding, and have sought to present religious truth in its proper clothing of loveliness and benignity. The supreme and governing principle of the school, as of the whole movement, has been *love*.

And who can estimate the results? Its benefits in some degree, have been participated by about 4,000 children; very many of these *are known* to have been brought through it to repentance and salvation; and who can calculate the number to whom it has been the means of spiritual good, of whom as yet nothing is known?

Not long since a messenger came to the school with the request from a poor girl in a hospital that "one of the ladies of Chequer Alley" would be good enough to visit her as soon as convenient. This request was understood to be meant for Miss Macarthy, was forwarded to her, and immediately complied with. At first the visitor did not recognise her; but the poor sufferer explained as she had strength that she was one of the daughters of a man who had lived in the Alley with two

women; and that she, with two or three others of his children, had attended the school; she reminded her friend how she had laboured for the conversion of her ungodly parent; and how he persisted in courses of sin and vice, till one day a plate of scraps having been given to him at a public house, he was greedily devouring them when a bone stuck in his throat and he fell down and suddenly expired. "I wanted to see you before I die," she continued, "to tell you that my sins are forgiven; that God has made me His child, and I am very peaceful and happy in the prospect of death; and that I owe my hope of heaven to your faithful labours. You led me to the Sunday-school a poor ignorant and destitute child: there I heard of a Saviour for the lost, and I am now going to be for ever with Him. But how I longed to see you that I might tell you that you have been the instrument of my salvation."

Out of a multitude of other cases of usefulness I select the following which will be found to possess peculiar interest.

A sweep and a maker of dolls'-wigs whose wives were sisters, lived in separate rooms in the same house. The sweep had three children, two of them boys, who all belonged to the Sunday-school. Urged by these children, the two sisters set out one Sunday evening to attend the service,

but their courage failing when they reached the room, instead of entering, they stood gazing listlessly through the window. Their presence soon attracted attention and they were invited to step in. The service interested and gratified them, and they came the next Sunday. Shortly afterwards they were visited at their homes, were found in a most comfortless condition, and in heathenish ignorance. They had heard the sacred Names of God and Christ; but had heard them most frequently as used profanely; and knew little more than the Names. But they were willing to be taught; and gradually became enlightened, impressed, and penitent. Afterwards they were invited to the class, and eventually they both gave evidence of a spiritual change. They were greatly persecuted by their husbands and neighbours, but they continued steadfast.

The sweep died suddenly, and the widow afterwards married a whip-maker, with whom she emigrated to Australia. The whole family, husband, wife, and her three children, are now living in that country in a good social position, accredited members of the Wesleyan Church.

The sister had one son, a stubborn, self-willed, and undutiful lad, who gave her continual sorrow of heart; and her husband was a confirmed drunkard. For many years her life was spent in

perpetual harassment and grief. But holy principles waxed stronger through her trials, and she meekly maintained her fidelity to Christ. The son grew to be eighteen years of age, copying more and more his father's example; drinking hard and perpetually, swearing diabolically, and seeming to delight in distressing his mother with taunts and insults. Her remonstrances were sometimes peculiarly tender and affecting; but these he repelled in tones of defiant irony. At length his constitution broke down; consumption set in; and his friends saw that his suicidal course would soon be run. Again he was reasoned with concerning his desperate spiritual condition, and entreated to seek an interest in the redemption wrought out by Christ. For a time he continued to resist every effort to rouse or to allure him to a consciousness of his state of guilt; but gradually he became attentive, then began to discover some symptoms of religious solicitude. The disease made progress; and he became more and more serious, then deeply alarmed and penitent. For two years while the insidious malady was slowing wasting his once vigorous frame, he was regularly visited, exhorted, and prayed with. And the efforts of his friends resulted in a most marvellous change. Before his death he became a preacher of righteousness to his still drunken and deeply-depraved father, and

ultimately passed away rejoicing in hope of eternal life.

The conversion of the son, his earnest appeals, and his peaceful death, together with the wife's consistency and faithfulness, produced impressions on the father's mind which he laboured in vain to remove; and which gradually brought about a change in his life. First, he began to spend his evenings at home, instead of at the public-house or the theatre, as heretofore. Then he stole away to places of worship; and, to prevent detection, went sometimes to one church or chapel, and sometimes to another. His wife saw the buddings of a reformation, and gave thanks to God, but left it to develope itself; continuing to exert an alluring and cherishing influence, yet avoiding all apparent constraint. And she had her reward. After a protracted career of vice and brutality, he gradually assumed a character of the utmost mildness, gentleness and docility, and died rejoicing in God his Saviour.

The widow still lives, patiently waiting till her own change come, and is meanwhile supported by her sister in Australia.

XI.

Drink.

IN this section I purpose to state the conversion of two women, whose history affords a terrible insight into the evils and the inveteracy of the drinking habits so widely prevalent among those ranks of society to which this memoir chiefly relates; and which will be found, I trust, to supply a ground of hope even for the most abandoned.

We are all ready to denounce drunkenness as the deadliest curse under which our poor and ignorant neighbours groan, and the greatest obstacle to their elevation. But are we as considerate as we ought to be for those peculiar provocatives and incentives to this evil to which they are subject? Do we make due allowances for inherited constitutional tendencies; for early and habitual training; for the force of example; for the exhaustion and stupor produced by physical toil; for the nervous depression caused by bad air, innutritious or insufficient food, and exposure to cold; and for the lack of such means of recrea-

tion and pleasurable excitement as people of a better social grade find in books, in intellectual companionships, and in the scenes of nature? Is there as much intelligent sympathy among us with the helplessness of the intemperate as there ought to be? And, are we as patient, and judicious, and *persistent* in the use of means for their reformation as a true faith in the power of the means we employ so obviously demands? These are some of the questions which ought to be answered in the presence of such facts as the following:—

When describing the conversion of the first twenty, I mentioned the case of a youth who was found standing in a corner of the room in a kind of ecstacy. That youth, like the rest of the group, was called to pass through a sharp ordeal of persecution, of which the chief instrument in his case was his own mother. No words would be too strong to paint the besotted and beastly condition in which this woman habitually grovelled. Reason, conscience, and every noble power, were kept down in absolute prostration before the one engrossing passion for drink. Her life was almost a continuous frenzy. From dawn to deep night, goaded by the unappeasable appetite, her single and incessant demand was *more drink!* Frequently before her accustomed haunt was open, she was seen standing at the door

impatient to obtain and swallow down the delicious poison. And being reduced to the level of the beast, intellectually and morally, her very features assumed a brutish cast. Her countenance was bloated, and her habitual expression gross and repulsive.

Was there hope for a creature like this? Was it possible to lift her up to the rank of God's rational offspring,—to bring her even into a state of conscious fellowship with God Himself? So the poor youth, her converted son, believed in his simplicity; and could have truly said, "As for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for" her. So equally believed our intelligent and earnest friend. Yet it was long before either of them discerned the minutest ground of encouragement in the conduct of the woman herself. The youth's refusal to sing filthy songs at her request, irritated her to madness; his prayers for her salvation, sometimes offered in the dead of night, and then necessarily in her presence, for they slept in the same room, called forth her wildest imprecations. Once when she was offered a religious tract, and an attempt was made to allure her into a conversation respecting her highest interests, the good attempt was savagely repelled with the threat to put tract and tract-distributor alike on the fire!

Not a few Christian workers would by this time have given up the case as desperate. "We have done our duty," they would have said, "but the woman is essentially and irremediably bad. She must now be left to herself, and our energies must be directed towards other and more promising objects." But this is the reasoning of a mercenary and distrustful feeling. True faith prompts to the putting forth of unfailing effort, and a patient watching for favourable opportunities to give it effect, even in the absence of encouraging indications. And such happily was the faith of the labourers in this instance. It was not long before a clear occasion of remonstrance occurred. The woman had filched her poor boy's jacket for the double purpose of preventing his attendance at a religious meeting, and of obtaining money upon it at a "*Leaving-place*," or illicit pawn-shop. This she could be made to understand and feel was wrong. She was spoken to mildly, but in terms of firm expostulation and censure; and she now gave the first signs of a sense of shame. But what was she to do? For the money had been spent in drink. Probably the first thought of many benevolent persons would have been to supply the requisite amount (only two shillings) and redeem the garment. But our friend deemed it good to appeal to the dormant sense of honour,

and put the woman to the voluntary practice of self-denial, by offering to lend the money. The proposal called forth the jeers of bystanders, who bade her take the proffered sum and *forget* the repayment. She took it, however, as a loan, the counsel of her mocking neighbours only giving strength to the resolution to pay it back. And repay the money she did; going to the preaching-room for this express purpose, with a happier look than she had ever before shown.

It was evident then that there was something to work upon in that miserably degraded mind. Yet no other favourable symptom was to be traced for many months. Her husband died suddenly; and immediately afterwards she went to live with a dustman almost as depraved as herself. So excessively gross continued her habits of swearing that a profane man was accustomed to open her door as he passed, to inquire in jest whether she had said her prayers!

Yet the labour bestowed upon her *had never been in vain.* The good seed was fixing itself in her heart though in silence and darkness. Good thoughts were occasionally passing through her poor benighted understanding, and good resolutions flitting before it, of which outside observers knew nothing, of which the woman herself was scarcely conscious.

Very unexpectedly at last a sign of spiritual anxiety betrayed itself. Our persevering friend was speaking words of persuasive admonition to the dustman, when she caught sight of the woman standing behind the door listening with evident interest. Advantage was at once taken to invite her to the evening service, *and she went.* The invitation was repeated, and she came again; afterwards the two people were found to attend time after time. Light was dawning (but oh how slowly!) on her mind. Once the preacher referred to the presence of Christ, agreeably to his own words,—"Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst,"—and, starting, she gazed round, expecting to behold Him! Her son desired to be baptized; and she accompanied him to City-road Chapel for the purpose; the first time she had ever entered a regular place of worship in her life!—and the preacher said something at which she exclaimed, "What a fool the man is!" Gradually she now became proud of her son, and attached to her untiring friend. The youth's consistency of conduct, and improved personal appearance and manners, affected her deeply. At the urgent request of the visitors, she and the dustman consented to be married, and the woman then began to evince some sense of self-respect. From this time,

though as she has stated, more from an involuntary regard for her friends, than on spiritual grounds, she and her husband came frequently, almost regularly, to the little Sunday evening service.

More and more the light penetrated and diffused itself; and more and more she was roused to a consciousness of her baseness and guilt. But the craving for gin was still unappeased, and even the sense of spiritual destitution itself, was allowed to impel her to its freer use. A terrible struggle ensued. One evening, coming out of the room in deep distress, she said with an imploring look, never to be forgotten, "Dear tract-lady, will you pray for me?" "On condition," was the reply, "that you pray for yourself." It was then agreed that at ten o'clock that very night each should offer prayer for her salvation, apart in their own room. Yet the moment the agreement was made she directed her steps to the gin-palace. It was the last time however; for looking up to the time-piece when the appointed hour arrived, she startled her wretched associates by exclaiming, "It's ten o'clock; I have to go home to pray!" And she quitted the miserable place never to enter it more.

The next evening she was again visited by her friend; and, in reply to her inquiries, stated that

she had kept her promise, and had prayed specially that she might be reclaimed from drunkenness. "Do you believe that God will hear your prayer?" was asked: "and in that case, relying on the help you have sought, will you abstain from intoxicating drinks of every kind for one month?" The promise was promptly given; *and it was kept*, but the amount of bodily and mental suffering which the poor woman endured during that month, exceeds all estimation. Her whole frame seemed gradually to collapse; her countenance became wan and ghastly; her steps faltered; her limbs trembled; and her neighbours urged her for pity's sake to return to her old habits. Yet, sustained by a will supernaturally strengthened, and by the often recurring visits of her friend, she faithfully adhered to her resolution. At the end of the month she was beginning to regain her bodily strength, and felt a kind of gratification in promising to abstain another month.

She was still regularly visited, watched over, and encouraged. With the return of health and right reason she began to feel more and more intensely the bitterness of sin. It is unnecessary to describe the deep anguish of soul through which she ultimately passed. Let it be enough to say that after a three days' involuntary fasting;

after a pressure of emotion which her shattered frame could not have much longer survived; she suddenly rose into a state of calm and joyousness of which she previously had no conception. "I thought," she said to me, after speaking of a state of wretchedness which reminded me of words we associate with another region —

> "Me miserable! Which way shall I flee?
> Infinite wrath, and infinite despair:
> Which way I flee is hell; myself am hell—."

"I thought, who am I? I certainly am not Mrs. ——This is not the poor wretch I myself am! I began to eat my food, and to find a strange enjoyment in life; *and was as light as a cork!*" No spot on earth is so dear to her as the obscure little room where this mighty change was first felt. She would like to this day to occupy it as her dwelling. Shortly after a similar change was experienced by her husband. Then an old man in another apartment of the same house, and a youth of 19, residing in another room, were as truly converted. The husband afterwards lived a godly life, witnessed a good confession and triumphantly entered into rest. The old man and the youth, after a few years of consistent Christian discipleship, both died in peace in the course of the same week; the former in St. Luke's Workhouse; the latter in a garret in Whitecross

Street. The woman herself still lives; and is, as she has now been for twenty years, a pattern of good works.

The other case, though not of less interest, must be stated more briefly. In its earlier stages it is a type of thousands in London. "Sometimes," says Mayhew, "a child of four or five is taken to the tap-room, especially if he be pretty and the father is proud of him. 'I have seen,' said a coster to me 'a baby of *five years old*, reeling drunk in a tap-room. The governor did it for the lark of the thing; to see him chuck hisself about, sillified."* Such in effect was the training of the woman whose case I am now to mention; yet not under the hands of an idiotic father, but of her mother! At as early a period as she can remember she was regularly sent for gin, which her mother made her drink; and when the poor child, prompted by a natural instinct, shrank from the liquid fire, it was diluted and modified with mixtures of sweet "cordials" and forced down her throat!

The dreadful taste thus created became the most dominant and vehement passion of her nature. A craving was evoked and established which she had no power in herself to hold in check, and which with every indulgence became more and more fierce. The result was a succession of lapses

* *London Labour and the London Poor*, p. 41.

into debauchery and deception such as may not be recorded. Under keen pangs of remorse, an occasional and spasmodic effort was made to recover herself, but in each instance was succeeded by a more desperate plunge into vice.

When discovered by Miss Macarthy and her co-workers she was living with a dustman whom she called her uncle. The history of the wisely-directed effort put forth, and, despite unheard-of discouragements, persistently sustained for this woman's salvation would be one of the most instructive chapters on Christian usefulness that have ever been given to the world. For *nine years* did the earnest and faithful labourers bear with her repeated failures of solemnly expressed resolution, and her practices of hypocrisy, till the chiefest of them after a three weeks' illness on her account, was compelled to say, what she had never said or thought in any other case, that she feared the woman must be given up as past hope.

The poor old dustman died in the workhouse; and the woman having sold or pawned for gin every article of furniture they had possessed, and every article both of his and of her own apparel, *except the gown she wore*, came at length and sought admission to Miss Macarthy's class. Of course, there she could not be received. "I am in despair," exclaimed the wretched applicant; "and

like a desperate woman, if you do not receive me, I will plunge headlong into hell!" She pledged herself to abstain from drink absolutely, and was allowed to attend the class as a visitor, was then received formally on trial, and was dealt with as a probationer for *nine* months. During this period she gave satisfactory evidence of true repentance, and of a thorough spiritual change. At this day she is a strict abstainer, and an upright, trustworthy, and consistent Church member.*

* Since the above was written, and while these sheets are going through the press, this woman has died. In her illness, which has only been of three days' duration, she was visited by many of her "class-mates," who, remembering what her previous life had been, were anxious to ascertain her spiritual condition in the prospect of death. "I feel," said she in answer to their inquiries, "that I have firm footing under me. *I stand on the Rock!* All is well!"

XII.

Power unto Salvation.

THE practical value of the preceding narrative consists in its testimony to the power of Christianity to reclaim the most abandoned; and to this I have now to request the reader's most serious attention. "The greatest of all charities is that which is the parent of the rest." If you would really and permanently benefit the masses of your fellow-countrymen, whose state of indigence and vice moves your compassion, your efforts must be directed against something that lies deeper than the evils you see. The cause of those evils must be assailed; and this you will not find in their outward condition, but deep down in the innermost soul. The most effectual method of raising the fallen is to give them strength to raise themselves. The administration of stimulants, and the offer of your hand to assist, may not be without their use, but the most urgent want of the spiritually-diseased and degraded around you is inward *power;* the power which consists in an enlightened and rectified con-

science; a keen sense of the deformity of sin; a renovated and Divinely-strengthened will; a heart purified by the grace, and regulated by the conscious presence of God; a love to purity and truth, and beauty; power which results from a living and active faith in Christ as "the LORD *our Righteousness.*"

This does not imply that the material condition of the poorer and outcast ranks is to be disregarded. But the mistake of much of the philanthropy of our day, is that it busies itself too exclusively with the material; or at best with certain recognised *symptoms* of the moral disorder, instead of going directly to the treatment at its root and source.

One of the schemes for the amelioration of the poor, which is just now engaging the thoughts of earnest, intelligent, and practical men, and to which the attention of the legislature will yet have to be largely directed, is that of providing better house accommodation. Nor is it possible to over-estimate the importance of this question. Even on the grounds of self-interest, it must be considered and dealt with; for by what kindly power are we ourselves to be protected from pestilence and plague, if we allow hot-beds of infection to exist around our very dwellings? Yet we shall greatly err if we rely on the erection of better

houses for the *reformation* of the classes already so deeply degraded. As a means of *prevention*, for the benefit of those well-conducted labourers whom the cruel exigencies of commerce are driving into a social proximity which is ruinous alike to moral and physical health, the provision of suitable house-accommodation is a matter of the most urgent necessity. But upon that immense mass of the humbler ranks of our countrymen, existing in the enormous proportion of one to three of well-conducted labourers, who are already dead to every sense of decency, order, cleanliness, and self-respect,—all efforts in this direction would be worse than futile.

Of another agency, which aims to be not only preventive but restorative, I desire to speak with much deference and hope. *The Temperance Society* has been, and is, an inestimable blessing to this country. It has rescued thousands of our population from the lowest depths of vice, and has been the direct means of leading them to the attainment of spiritual blessings, which it is itself unable to confer. For the reformation of the habitual drunkard, *total abstinence* from every kind of intoxicating drink, is absolutely indispensable. But will the advocates of temperance forgive the expression of a doubt whether they are not frequently too exclusive and one-sided in their

representations? Are there not many instances in which drunkenness is *not* the cause of the general degradation they deplore, but a part of that degradation, or one of its symptoms? Is it not indeed very often an *effect* rather than a cause? May we not as truly say, in many cases, that men are intemperate because they are self-abandoned and brutal, as that they are self-abandoned and brutal because they are intemperate? Does not dissoluteness as directly lead to excessive drinking, as drinking to excess leads to the practices and habits of dissoluteness?

Another class of social reformers places its chief reliance on the power of education. Call forth, it is accustomed to say, the energies of the mind for the acquisition of knowledge; cause the depressed and the degraded to understand that the greatest good to man does not consist in self-indulgence and sensuality; develope their powers of thought and reason; quicken and call forth intellectual taste; inspire that just self-respect which leads men to take pleasure in books and in lectures, in rational conversation, and in seeing their homes not only clean and tidy, but well-furnished, and rendered attractive by decorations, and ———. Yes, verily, then the work of secular reformation would be done. But the question is, how is all this to be accomplished?

"The foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men." What the fallen masses around you want is the introduction among them of a *Power* which no human machinery can produce. That Power is Divinely provided in the truth of Christianity. Strange that this assertion should still require to be defended! That, despite the righteous and undisputed boast of St. Paul, that the Gospel of Christ, in contrast with all existing codes of morals, was the Power of God unto salvation; despite those numerous attestations of its transforming Power to which the apostle was accustomed to appeal; despite the wonderful and widely-extended moral revolutions it produced during the first three centuries of the Christian Era, so that Christians could boldly say in reply to the sneers of heathen philosophy, "*We do not speak great things but live them;*" despite the mighty changes it effected here in the characters of thousands upon thousands, some of them the most ruffianly and besotted in the nation, as brought to act upon them by the early Methodists; despite its elevating and civilizing influence on savages and cannibals in our own times; despite examples of its reforming efficiency perpetually occurring in our own neighbourhoods and under our own eyes; —it should still be pronounced ignorance, narrow-

ness and religious cant, to speak of Christianity as our great renovating Power!

But a single example is better than a hundred untried theories, however plausible. In Chequer Alley, by the mere force of wisely-used means for bringing Christian truth to act on the conscience and heart, without the influence which wealth commands; without high intellectual culture; without the *prestige* of office or of superior social position, *hundreds* of degraded men and women have been effectually lifted up out of that terrible slough, from which they had neither power nor desire to extricate themselves, and *thousands* of helpless children have been preserved from falling into it!

And what Christianity has done in Chequer Alley it will do everywhere, if faithfully, fairly and persistently tried.

Have *you* faith in its power? Then remember faith requires you—

1. So far as practicable to bring the truth into action on the hearts and characters of ungodly men by *your personal labours*. There are many Chequer Alleys, not only in this Metropolis but in every part of the country; and if all Christians would work in their own neighbourhoods, with one tenth of the constancy and energy which our friend has manifested, how deep and beautiful

would be the changes wrought in vast multitudes of our perishing countrymen! Will *you* not apply your own powers to this great task! Are *you* willing to take the responsibility of neglecting it!

2. But all cannot devote any large portion of time to the personal prosecution of this work. Then let them supplement their own exertions by assisting to send forth men to labour in the field in freedom from worldly care, giving themselves "wholly" to this one thing. What is wanting at this moment in Chequer Alley, and what many other localities in London demand, is the immediate erection of a plain School-Chapel to serve for the purposes of Day-school, social and religious gatherings, Sunday-school, and public religious services, with an intelligent and earnest Home Missionary Minister, devoting himself heartily and honestly to his work, and supported, as such a Minister will always be, sooner or later, by a band of willing lay fellow-labourers.

3. And remember a true faith demands perseverance. "*Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*"

Works by the same Author.

PENTECOST;

AND THE FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH.

Crown 8vo., price 3s. 6d.

"We warmly commend the book."—*Wesleyan Magazine.*

"The results, as well of independent thought, as of much reading among German and other commentators and critics; but the sentiment, like the style, is English, and the spirit is that of a searching, but of a sound theologian."—*Watchman.*

"An invaluable companion to Mr. Arthur's 'Tongue of Fire.'"—*British Standard.*

"It is in our judgment equal, in every particular, to Mr. Arthur's 'Tongue of Fire.' This is high praise."—*Coleraine Chronicle.*

THE TWO TESTIMONIES,

AND

THE LAST OBJECTIONS OF RATIONALISM.

Crown 8vo., price 3s.

"The first edition of this able little volume has been already noticed in this Review . . . . A calm and scholarly consideration of the supposed difficulties of the Pentateuch."—*London Quarterly Review.*

"A calm, clear style, that gives force and weight to his reasoning."—*Record.*

"Of all the scores of replies that the speculations of the heretical Bishop have elicited, we have met with none more acute and convincing, and above all, more conscientiously fair."—*Patriot.*

"Suited to check and correct the religious scepticism of these times."—*Homilist.*

"Gentle words, but really hard arguments."—*Wesleyan Magazine.*

"We are sincerely grateful to the Rev. F. W. Briggs for its compilation."—*Watchman.*

"The argument is one of some delicacy and difficulty; nevertheless, Mr. Briggs has handled it successfully and well."—*Weekly Review.*

"We are glad to welcome a new edition," &c.—*Methodist Recorder.*

"Small in size, but most compact and forcible in argument." *Irish Evangelist.*

"Carries conviction with it on every page . . . The spirit of the work does credit to both the head and the heart of the author."—*Wesleyan Times.*

MISSIONS APOSTOLIC AND MODERN.

Crown 8vo., 3s. 6d.

"Calm, vigorous, and eloquent in style."—*Weekly Review.*

"The Missionary Conference, at Liverpool, did not suggest more valuable hints than are contained in this laborious but inexpensive volume."—*Christian Spectator.*

"Fills up a gap, and meets a want which must have attracted the study and solicitude of many Christians."—*English Presbyterian Messenger.*

"Wherever the book is read it will tend to intensify the flame of Missionary zeal, and shew that its action springs from the very essence and life of Christianity."—*New Congregational Magazine.*

"This, his last work, we deem his best."—*Methodist Recorder.*

"We have read this volume, by a Wesleyan Minister, with unfeigned pleasure."—*Baptist Magazine.*

"An intelligent account of Missionary enterprise from the days of the Apostles down to the present time."—*Glasgow Examiner.*

"The book is a meritorious one, and cannot fail to be extensively circulated."—*Liverpool Compass.*

LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS, & Co.
AND 66, PATERNOSTER ROW.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY HAYMAN BROTHERS,
GOUGH SQUARE, E.C.,
AND GLOUCESTER STREET, REGENT'S PARK, N.W.